

## “The Christmas Celebration That Never Ends” Christmas 2

1)

2)

January 3, 2021

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thess 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Christmas trees and decorations have been taken down, packaged up and put away until next year. Kids have burned through batteries on their favorite toy. All the stores have moved on to Valentine's Day displays. And about all that's left are the leftovers that have reached their expiration date in the fridge and the bill. Can you believe it's all over?

The rest of the world says that Christmas is over and done with. Even the little date you write out at the top of your check now reads 2021. But the calendar of the church year calls this the Second Sunday after Christmas. And this morning, we want to come to know why - **The Christmas Celebration Continues.**

### **We have his daily presence**

We don't know much about who the author of Hebrews is, or even the recipients of the book or where they lived, other than small tidbits of information here and there. But we do know that encouragement was given to those who were in the midst of suffering persecution. The letter tells us all about the supreme treasure we have in Christ. And here in chapter 2, the writer relates to us who Jesus is and what he came to do.

**<sup>14</sup>Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity... and again in <sup>17</sup>For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way...**

Jesus became one of us. He took on flesh and blood. He was a human being in every way, except was without sin. He was hungry; thirsty; wept; slept; and even died. Everything we experience in this life, Jesus experienced too. And after Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't stop being human. He appeared to his disciples as human as he was when he was placed in the manger as a little baby.

The first point we want to remember this morning why this Christmas celebration never ends – is that **we have his daily presence.** Right after the writer tells us that Jesus came to earth and

took on flesh and blood as a human being, he finishes each statement telling us the purpose for his coming. In fact, he makes several points in this section as to why Jesus came.

At times it is easy for us to overlook the true meaning and miracle of Christmas. We get caught up in the worldly commercialism and festive celebrations that go along with it. But then it comes to an end. The calendar turns to a new year and the celebration is over. With Jesus, the celebration continues. B/c we have his daily presence.

v. 18 - **Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. He can help us when we are tempted. As he healed the sick, he helps us when we are sick. As he mourned the loss of his dear friend Lazarus, he is there for us when we mourn our losses. And now that he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, he rules over all things for our good. And before he left, he promised his disciples and all of us - **"Surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** The Christmas celebration continues - we have his daily presence.

**We also have daily blessings - Free from fear of death**

v. 14 - **he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.**

Fear. It's a distressing emotion brought on by impending danger, evil, or pain. Sometimes the fear is real, sometimes imagined. You and I may have our fears - like the dark, an open closet, spiders. But those fears cannot compare to the very real fears of an unbeliever. This verse tells us about the fear of death holding one back like slavery. I can't and do not want to think how terrible it would be to have that type of fear - not knowing what happens to you when you die.

Thank the Lord that he has made it known to us. The Christmas celebration continues with daily blessings. Jesus came and took on human flesh so he could keep all of God's laws and live perfectly in our place. No longer does God see us for the horrible sinners that we are. Instead, he sees Jesus' perfect life credited to our account. And the death that we face, is but a sleep for those who

believe in Jesus. He will return to wake up our bodies out of the grave, just as Jesus rose from the dead. The daily blessing that we have is that every moment and every hour is free from fear of death, safe and secure in the arms of our good Shepherd Jesus.

**Daily Blessings - Free from temptation**

Another daily blessing (14) **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.**

The word “**destroy**” here doesn’t mean to annihilate out of existence. Jesus destroyed the devil in the sense that he was rendered ineffective or useless. He's still around to tempt us. The Bible describes the devil as one “**prowl[ing] around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**” (1 Pet. 5:8) But we can “**resist him**” and all his empty lies and promises by looking to Jesus for strength to say “No” to temptation, as Jesus said no to all the devil's advances for 40 days in the wilderness. Jesus gives us the strength to live each day as an opportunity to love and serve him for all that he has done for us.

The devil has no power over us. When you walk away from the Holy Supper, it will be my body and blood running through your veins. I walked a mile in your shoes, so you can follow me in my path.” **Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** Jesus was tempted, too, in every way just as we are. He overcame every temptation with the word, and he empowers us with his forgiveness to do the same. He’s been there, done that.

**Daily Blessings - "at-one" with God**

The last daily blessing comes from the thought in v. 17 - **For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.**

Atonement is a word that the Jewish recipients of this letter would have known quite well. In fact, it was God's design to have the high priest make sacrifices “**day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people...**” (Heb 7:27) But Jesus was a different kind of high priest. “**...He sacrificed for their sins (the people's) once for all when he offered himself.**” Jesus has paid for all our sins. This is what the word atone is describing - how Jesus has literally made us AT-ONE with God. He's restored, repaired and reconciled our relationship with God. The

punishment we deserved has been paid for. The demands of a holy and righteous God have been met. We have **peace** with God.

I cannot even begin to imagine what Christmas would be like without Christ - and nor do I want to. Sadly, more and more would like a "Christ"-less Christmas. But you and I know and are convinced that **The Christmas Celebration Continues.** There may be no more eggnog or piles of ripped apart wrapping paper growing out of your garbage, but the celebration of the Christ-child born to save us from our sins continues. He is daily present with us, calming all our fears and giving us true and lasting peace. He has come and destroyed death and the devil. He will return again to take us home to be with him forever in heaven. Dear friends, that is cause for the celebration to continue each and every day.

May we share the good news of our Savior's birth, and the peace he came to bring.

Let's pray – Dear Lord Jesus...

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)

**<sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. <sup>12</sup> He says,**

**“I will declare your name to my brothers;  
in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.”**

**<sup>13</sup> And again, “I will put my trust in him.”**

**And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”**

**<sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**